

Bristol Bay Regional Visioning Project

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Information Insights

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Back ground

In January, 2010, Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) released an RFP to solicit proposals from companies interested in bidding on a project to develop a Scope of Work and to conduct a Regional Visioning Process within the communities of Bristol Bay. The RFP was issued on behalf of five Bristol Bay institutions: Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Bristol Bay Native Association, Bristol Bay Housing Authority, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation and Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation. Bristol Bay Native Association has administrative responsibility for the project.

Information Insights, a public policy research and management consulting firm with offices in Anchorage and Fairbanks, was selected to develop the Scope of Work. The project scope was delivered and accepted on Mar. 11, 2010 and Information Insights was retained as the consultants to implement the process. What follows is a description of the project.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to conduct a regional visioning process within the communities and among the residents of Bristol Bay. It is intended to give voice to the shared values of the region and seeks to identify the underlying principles that connect the people of Bristol Bay.

- The project will engage people in every community of the region. Participants will have multiple opportunities to express themselves and to interact with one another in an open, welcoming atmosphere at community meetings.
- Additional tools will include use of electronic audience response (Consensor™ technology); an interactive website; a newsletter; and social media, such as Facebook.

As the project develops, the shared values of the Bristol Bay region will emerge from the interactions and conversations. Based on those values, a unifying Vision will be crafted that can serve as a guide for future policy choices by the institutions and the people of the region.

The project's success rests with the ownership of the process by the people of the Bristol Bay Region.

Scope of Work: Overview

The major elements of this project are:

1. Establish a Commission of respected and trusted people to convene the community gatherings.
2. Conduct thorough research about the social, economic and community conditions of Bristol Bay in order to provide an objective, common baseline document for community meetings.
3. Coordinate community outreach and conduct two rounds of community meetings: the first in Oct/Nov 2010, and the follow up meetings in Feb. /March 2011.
4. Analyze and synthesize peoples' comments, concerns and values at the meetings.
5. The Commission prepares a Vision statement.
6. Regional meeting at which Commission presents the Vision statement in May 2011.

Flow of Work

Research			
Commission Meeting			
Community Meeting Round 1			
Analysis and Synthesis Round 1			
Community Meetings Round 2			
Analysis and Synthesis Round 2			
Presentation of Findings			
Public Information and Outreach			
	Summer 2010	Fall/Winter 2010	Winter/Spring 2011

Roles and Responsibilities of the Project Team

The success of this project depends on the full participation and collaboration of the entire team.

Bristol Bay Partnership – 5 regional institutions

- Designate a person to serve as an official point of contact within each Partner agency
- Make recommendations for and sign off on the composition of the Commission.
- Budget oversight and approval.
- Communicate importance of project and encourage participation by constituents and staff.
- Travel to community meetings when possible.
- Participate in meetings with the Consultant to review project progress.
- Attend and participate in final regional meeting.

Commission

- The composition of the Commission is a fundamental element in establishing the credibility of the project. Commission members must be respected people who represent the diversity of the Bristol Bay communities and can be trusted to faithfully reflect the voices of the people in their development of the Vision. They also have the responsibility to guarantee and demonstrate transparency, neutrality and making it safe for all to participate. There are no hidden agendas.
- Commission members will be appointed by the Bristol Bay Partnership. Commissioners agree to travel to community meetings to convene the gatherings and to listen to the people who come to participate.

- Travel to community meetings with Consultant to be the face and critical eyes and ears of the project (hope for 3-7 Commissioners on each trip).
- Encourage community members to participate.
- Review community meeting outcomes.
- Develop the Vision based on the voice of participants at community meetings.

BBNA

- Serve as fiscal agent for grant and Consultant's point of contact.
- Meet with Consultant team to provide on-going coordination.
- Encourage residents to participate through engagement of Board members and staff
- Administratively support the Commission.
- Supervise project's Administrative Assistant and coordinate in-region travel and logistics for community meetings.

Consultant

- Implement inclusive, transparent, and user-friendly dialogue process in communities
- Conduct thorough background research of the region and provide an objective, common baseline document for community meetings
- Facilitate community meetings
- Create a brand for the visioning project
- Conduct public outreach to inform and engage participants
- Provide a variety of methods for people to contribute information: village meetings, interactive web site, gatherings with local governments and businesses and special outreach to youth
- Synthesize and analyze collected information
- Share information with participants – reflect both what they have said and what other communities have said
- Share findings with and draft the final Vision with the Commission
- Develop materials that reflect the resulting Vision and other outcomes (text, audio, video, web-based).

Detailed Work Elements:

1. Research and Preparation

Establishing a Baseline for Dialogue

The Consultant will review existing publications and plans and publications of the regional organizations, the Bristol Bay Campus of University of Alaska Fairbanks, local and tribal governments, SWAMC, and other organizations that BBNA may suggest. Dr. Steve Langdon, Chairman of the Anthropology Department of UAA, has extensive background and expertise in the region and will provide guidance

about fisheries issues, subsistence, and village sustainability. This research will be compiled into a report that will help guide the Consultant's work and be available to partners in the region as well.

Base on that research, the Consultant team will prepare a baseline of reliable information on the social and economic status of the people to provide to participants as a foundation for community conversations. This document will be presented in an accessible, attractive and digestible format.

It is essential that this information be framed as a common starting point for conversation and presented in a manner that is not in itself divisive or controversial. The role of this document is to help people talk about their values and desires in a way that is broader than specific issues and that looks farther to the future than what is on the immediate horizon.

Key pieces to include in research

- Population changes
- Economic structure
- Cultural history
- Land ownership patterns
- Access to subsistence resources
- Energy infrastructure
- Governance structures - Tribes, cities, boroughs
- School Districts
- Higher education institutions
- Health Delivery system
- Housing system
- Commercial Fishing policies and history
- Mining policies and the Pebble process

2. Public Process: Community Meetings

The Vision for the Bristol Bay region will come from the people of the region.

The Consultant will facilitate a process that ensures there are many ways and times for people to express their points of view and that enables participants to see and hear what other people in their community and in the region are considering.

- Community meetings in each of the villages and towns of the region will generate interaction with residents. All points of view will be solicited, respected and documented.
- The first round of meetings will be held in the fall of 2010, after moose hunting season. The second round will be in the spring of 2011, before the summer fishing season.
- The meetings will involve community residents, including people who serve on tribal councils, municipal governments and other local institutions and businesses.

- The gatherings will be widely publicized, planned to avoid conflicts with other community events, and open to all voices.
- The meetings will be organized so as to involve residents in an exploration and articulation of their values. These values will form the basis of the long term regional vision.

Consensor™ Technology

- To accomplish this project, it may be helpful to use some specialized tools to help groups find common ground, such as Consensor Audience Response Technology. Consensor™ helps to "level the playing field" in a discussion, allowing everyone to express their opinions safely regardless of their comfort speaking in public or their status in the group.
- Individuals use a simple 10-button keypads to wirelessly transmit their responses to yes-no or ranked priority questions.
- Audience responses are instantly tabulated and a chart showing the results is immediately available to display for the group's review or discussion.
- Consensor™ is popular with audience members. From Elders to young people, response to this method has been very popular in other parts of the state. During or after an event, Consensor™ allows more nuanced understanding of where a group stands on an issue by showing how different segments of the group responded to the same question.

Possible topics to be explored:

- Hopes and dreams for the opportunities for children and grandchildren of Bristol Bay residents
- Reliance on the natural resources of the region for family sustenance
- Celebration of and respect for the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the region
- Community services that strengthen family life and sustain village populations
- Educational policies that provide future generations with the tools to take advantage of all opportunities
- Health, housing and energy policies that will sustain village life in the region
- Public safety policies that support peaceful and harmonious communities
- Economic development policies that provide communities with choices about ways to generate income to support families
- Transportation and communication policies that facilitate the movement of goods and people, as well as connectivity among residents and with the rest of the world
- The comments of residents will be captured and documented by the Consultant. Written comments and letters will also be solicited and accepted through outreach links, such as a project web site and postal mail. Additionally, social networks such as Facebook will be established to attract youth audiences.

3. Analysis and Synthesis of Input

- The comments of participants at village meetings will be documented and then analyzed to reveal the range of opinion on topics as well as the suggestions offered by participants. Findings will be presented by village and for the region as a whole.

- Other methods of participation include comments received through the web site, letters, focus groups and interviews. Outreach to youth may include email communication or Facebook comments. All input will be documented, reviewed and synthesized.
- The values expressed by residents will serve as the basis for the draft Vision statement to be developed by the Commission.

4. Public Information and Outreach

Public information and outreach are essential to the success of this process. Often in public meetings and processes, the same people are involved. These regular players are important and their voices must be heard. However, success in this project will largely be defined by attracting many additional residents of the Bristol Bay region to the conversation, thus creating an inclusive vision for the region. Great effort must be made to ensure that everyone is both informed about the process and understands the purpose and the importance of the final product.

Elders and Youth will be a significant focus of the outreach plan.

- Partners have agreed to assist the project to identify youth who have travelled outside of the region for education or training opportunities. Email and Face book communication links will be developed to invite their participation
- Many youth return to the region to work in the summer months. Therefore, outreach efforts will be developed to invite their participation during the summer, before school starts
- High school students will be invited to participate through their social studies classes. Consultants will work with teachers during their in-service days before class begins in August to engage their participation throughout the school year.
- Elder Associations through out the region will be solicited for their participation
- Presentations will be provided to regional gatherings of Elders
- Translation services will be provided at community meetings

Other Challenges to be overcome

- People are busy
- People are burned out on meetings and plans
- Regional plans are often perceived as Dillingham-ce ntric
- The project could be perceived as being a tool to weigh in on Pebble
- People perceive that their input will not be taken seriously

